



Transportation Finance Issues

How much is spent on new highway construction vs. fixing existing roads?

State's primary responsibility is the state highway system

- Wisconsin is home to 112,920 miles of public roads – including federal, state and Interstate highways, local roads and streets. A little more than 10% of these roads (11,755 miles) comprise the state highway system.
- While the state highway system accounts for only 10% of all public road mileage in the state, it carries 60% of the traffic load.

Rehabilitating existing highways and bridges the top priority

- About 28% (\$1.36 billion) of the state's 2003-05 transportation budget is dedicated toward rehabilitating statewide highways and bridges. This includes \$244 million for reconstructing the aging Marquette Interchange in Milwaukee.
- Rehabilitation includes resurfacing projects, reconditioning and reconstructing highways to ensure safety driving conditions. Work on the 4,881 bridges along the state highway system generally includes improvements to increase load-carrying capacity and widen deck roadways.
- Input from the general public and elected officials, as well as analysis by state transportation engineers and planners, helps determine which highway rehabilitation projects get constructed.

Major highway projects are a small part of highway spending

- Major projects account for less than 10% (\$479 million in 2003-05) of transportation spending – 90 cents of every transportation dollar is used for other purposes.
- Under state law, a major highway project:
 - has a total cost of more than \$5 million
 - constructs a new route of 2.5 or more miles
 - adds capacity to five or more miles of an existing highway
 - or converts an existing multi-lane divided highway of 10 or more miles to freeway standards

- Typically, major projects do **not** create new highway corridors, but rather add capacity to existing corridors.
- Only about 6% additional lane miles have been added to the state highway system since the early 1980's. Meanwhile, travel during the period grew 75%.
- Of the money allocated for majors, only a portion is actually used for construction. Major program funds also pay for study and design costs, engineering fees and environmental mitigation.
- Frequently, major project funds are used to reconstruct existing lanes/bridges – work that would otherwise be paid for with state highway rehabilitation funds.

Major project selection process

- Work on Major Highway Projects is determined through input from the public, elected officials, and the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC).
- Created in 1983, the 15-member TPC is chaired by the Governor, includes five state senators, five representatives and three citizen members. The Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation serves as a non-voting member.
- The TPC holds public hearings and makes recommendations on major highway projects. Ultimately, the Governor and the Legislature determine which projects are added to the list for construction and funded through the state budget.
- A total of 57 projects have been completed since the program was created. Currently, there are:
 - 32 enumerated projects
 - 8 projects in the environmental study phase
 - 9 projects that are potential candidates to bring forward for environmental study

